

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUREAU STAIRÉ MILITAIRE 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1.704

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1704.

Witness

Mrs. M.A. McGrath,
"Cascade View",
Clogheen,
Co. Tipperary.

Identity.

Member of Cumann na mBan, Clonmel, Tipperary

Subject.

Clonmel Company, Irish Volunteers, Co. Tipperary,
and No. 2. Flying Column,
1920 - 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No. S. 3011.

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No. W.S. 1704

STATEMENT BY MRS. M. A. McGRATH,
"Cascade View", Clogheen, Co. Tipperary.

I, formerly Bridget Agnes Dooney, married Pat Gleeson in 1906, who died in 1921. I am now Mrs. Maurice A. McGrath, "Cascade View", Clogheen, Co. Tipperary. My father, Michael Dooney, was born in 1823 in Templederry Parish. When quite young, he joined the Fenian movement. I had six brothers and one sister.

My earliest recollections are stories of the Fenian movement related by my father. One story I remember was that when their unit was disbanded in 1867, Hugh Kelly and my father buried the guns and pikes in Latteragh. My father was a nice singer and very pleasant to listen to. He had a big collection of rebel songs which we loved to learn and sing.

We moved to Clonmel and opened a photographic business there in 1911. My sister and her husband and family came to Clonmel also. My sister's husband, Jim Patterson, was a Gaelic Leaguer, and rebel-minded also. My nephews, Michael, Denis, and Seumas Patterson, joined Fianna Éireann in 1916, and later joined the Irish Volunteers. Michael joined No. 2 Flying Column in December, 1920.

In 1920, the Volunteers raided for arms all over the Clonmel area. Dick Dalton and another Volunteer officer went to Lisronagh on inspection duty one Sunday early in December, 1920. They met four policemen going to church, fully armed, and learned that that was their usual practice on Sunday evenings. That evening, members of the local company, including Seán Cooney, Seán

Morrissey, Mick Patterson, Paddy Ryan, Theo English, Jack Sharkey, Ned Dalton, Dick Dalton, and Buddy Donohue, met in the old Sinn Féin Hall and decided to ambush the police on the following Sunday. The hall was raided during the meeting, but the boys managed to get away.

The ambush was successfully carried out on the following Sunday. Dick Dalton, Mick Patterson, Seán Morrissey, Buddy Donohue and some others took part in it. The captured arms were later used by members of the Clonmel Company when they joined the Flying Column.

Perhaps the following incidents, though minor, relative to the Black and Tan war and Clonmel's contribution to the fight for freedom may be of interest:

Petrol Consignment destroyed:

Very early in the Tan days, local intelligence reported that some thousands of gallons of petrol consigned to the enemy were awaiting delivery at Clonmel Railway Station. The I.R.A. thought it a good opportunity to dispose of same and lessen the Tans' activities in the country areas. The late E.V. White, clerk at the railway station, co-operated and made it possible for the Volunteers to effect an entry and successfully destroy the entire consignment.

Hostage Incident:

As will be remembered by many, a very usual occurrence was the arrest of a very prominent citizen to be used by the enemy as a hostage. The hostage was borne in lorries by the Tans to ensure the safe transport of their troops. Seán Cooney, Main Guard, Clonmel, a prominent officer of the 5th Battalion, was duly arrested and taken as hostage. Many thought that Seán's days were

numbered, as it was customary in those days to take out a prominent I.R.A. man and then pretend to let him escape. The result seldom varied - "shot whilst endeavouring to escape". Great was the relief of many of us on Seán's return. He was one of the most active men of the battalion, who did his work quietly and unassumingly, and his feelings may be visualised as he sat next to the machine-guns and the general arms in the lorry. His wish was to effect the transfer of that equipment to soldiers of the Republic.

Explosion at Dunne's Garage:

Local I.R.A. men, who were employed at Dunne's Garage as mechanics, were experimenting one night with a bomb. Evidently some technical difficulty arose, as suddenly a terrifying explosion occurred. The reverberations were heard over a wide area. The Tans barrack was situated in the vicinity of the garage. Tans and Auxiliaries rushed out and frantic activity resulted. One ex-soldier, who was one-armed, was accosted in Mitchel's St., and having failed to give satisfactory explanations of his movements, he was knocked down and they then proceeded to beat him up. A light which shone in the window of Mrs. Gleeson of Mitchel's St. hindered their nefarious intentions and the Tans promptly ordered her to put out the lights. She, being a prominent supporter of the Republican cause, defiantly refused to put them out. Finally, the Tans threatened to shoot them out. Mrs. Gleeson stated that she would put out the lights when she had cleared the customers from the shop. Fortunately for the ex-soldier, an R.I.C. police sergeant interfered and he was permitted to depart.

Miniature Arsenal at Mitchel St.:

My nephew, Mick Patterson, started to make buckshot from lead in our premises in Mitchel St. He taught all the members of the family to run buckshot. He made a ladle and mould with twelve circular cavities, into which was poured the molten lead. It was then trimmed and stored, ready for distribution. Provision of lead was the difficulty. All gas pipes in the cellar were removed and melted down and most of our gas connections were disconnected. On one occasion, at four o'clock in the morning, members of the family were aroused by the smell of gas. The Corporation gas fitter was called in "in the small hours" to fix the leak. He stated that the pipe had been cut too near the main.

Mick Patterson had a chimney shaft fitted in the cellar to hold guns and ammunition. The steps leading to the cellar were removed as a precaution, the intention being, in the event of a raid, to convey the impression that the cellar was unoccupied.

One morning about midday, a handcart, the property of Kavanagh Bros., Builders, moved out from the side entrance at Mitchel's St. It was carefully camouflaged with saw-dust and shavings, beneath which reposed a goodly number of Lee Enfields and other various guns. Short planks rested on the cart to give the impression that it was a carpenter's general equipment. Two members of the Fianna, Seumas Patterson and F. Gleeson, were detailed to push the cart through the town. It was necessary to pass two outposts of military. James Patterson, employed by Kavanagh Bros., kept the cart under observation until it had passed beyond the last outpost. Fortunately, the sentries accepted the explanation given by the Fianna members, that it was a

repair job to be carried out by Kavanagh Bros. in the outskirts of the town. This consignment was for the Clonmel section of No. 2 Flying Column, and it arrived safely.

I.R.A. plans for seizure of cars:

Dan Breen asked Seán Hogan to arrange that any members of the column with a technical knowledge of driving should seize motor cars for the maintenance of liaison between brigade and battalions. The column members met at my home, 30, Mitchel St., and were joined by Seán Sharkey, I/O, and Seán Cooney. Amongst those who attended were Thomas Mullaney, Ned Dalton, Paddy Hackett, Tom Kirwan, Mick Patterson, and Maurice McGrath. During the meeting, to the great surprise of all I.R.A. men present, Tom Looby, despatch carrier, walked quietly in. Amazement was the order of the moment, as Tom had been arrested near Clogheen on the occasion of the Garrymore ambush, three days previously. Looby had been detained for questioning, but he had succeeded in hiding the despatches under a stone. Subsequently, on release, he retraced his steps to the area, and having again secured his despatches, he delivered them safely at Clonmel. The I.R.A. believed that Looby, having been arrested with despatches, would be held for trial. His release was due to his astute dexterity in the concealment of the despatches.

At the close of the meeting, I took the attached photograph of those present. Reading from left to right the names are: - Front row: Maurice McGrath, Column Adjutant; Edward Dalton, Thomas Kirwan, Seán Sharkey,

the Battalion I/O, and Patrick Hackett. Back row: Thomas Mullaney, Michael Patterson, Seán Cooney, and Thomas Looby. All four in the back row, are now deceased.

They left between 11 p.m. and midnight to commandeer the cars. Ned Dalton succeeded in getting a small Ford car. Mick Patterson, who was a motor mechanic before joining the column, seized a motor cycle, owned by an Auxiliary, which had just been repaired in O'Gorman's garage. He actually took it in view of the Auxiliaries who were stationed in the Central Hotel, opposite the garage, and some of whom were on the balcony of the hotel at the time. That was on Monday, April 26th 1921.

Despatches:

My home was a centre for the receipt and despatch of despatches. It was convenient for Seán Sharkey, the Battalion I/O, and for Seán Cooney, who, as a rule, took charge of all despatches arriving in Clonmel. Myself and my children often delivered despatches to Scroutea, Derrinlar and Newcastle when it was considered unsafe for Volunteers to leave town with them. As a camouflage, I usually carried a camera, and if held up by police or military, I was supposed to be out photographing. At the time, in addition to studio work, our business included photographing children at their schools and country people in their homes.

Signed:

Budget A. McGoath

Date:

3 Dec 1957.

Witness:

Grace
(Investigator).

BUREAU OF THE BURO STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21
NO. W.S. 1,704

A P P E N D I X "A".



MANUSCRIPT NOTE ON BACK OF ABOVE PHOTOGRAPH:-

"Photograph taken at eleven
o'clock on the night of the
25th of April, 1921.

Mrs. M.A. McGrath,
Cascade View, Clogheen,
Cahir, Co. Tipp."